

IN HONOR OF THE FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the fifth anniversary of the independence of the Armenian Republic, which was celebrated this past Saturday, September 21.

Madam Speaker, the story of the Armenian people, one of the world's most ancient and enduring cultures, is an inspiring saga of courage, devotion to family and nation, and, most dramatically, the triumph over adversity and tragedy. Earlier in this century, in one of history's most horrible crimes against humanity, 1.5 million Armenian men, women, and children were slaughtered by the Ottoman Turkish Empire. Every April, Members of this House join in commemoration of the Armenian genocide. We can never relent, and we will not relent, in our efforts to remind the world that this tragedy is a historic fact—despite the efforts of so-called revisionists to deny the truth—and to make sure that our Nation, the world community, and especially the Turkish nation, come to terms with and appropriately commemorate this historic fact.

But today, Madam Speaker, I want to talk about a much more joyous occasion in the great history of the Armenian people. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 allowed the Armenian people to finally achieve a true sense of nationhood, to create a society where their language, culture, religion, and other institutions would be able to prosper. The progress made in 5 short years by the Republic of Armenia has been an inspiration—not only for the sons and daughters of the Diaspora, but for all Americans who support the cause of freedom. Having survived the genocide, and living for decades under the yoke of the Soviet Union, the brave people of Armenia have endeavored to build a free and proud nation, based on the principles of democracy and a market economy.

Madam Speaker, as they have for so much of their history, the Armenian people have accomplished all this against daunting odds. The tiny, landlocked Republic of Armenia is surrounded by hostile neighbors who have imposed blockades that have halted the delivery of basic necessities. Yet, independent Armenia continues to persevere and even prosper. While democracy has proven to be elusive in much of the former Soviet bloc, democratic Armenia held parliamentary elections last year and will hold nationwide presidential elections later this year.

As the founder and cochairman, with the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. PORTER], of the Congressional Caucus on Armenia Issues, I consider United

States-Armenia relations to be one of our key foreign policy objectives. Support for Armenia is in our practical interests, helping to support a stable nation in a strategically important and often unstable part of the world. Standing by Armenia is also consistent with America's calling to support democracy and human rights, and to defend free peoples throughout the world. In the ongoing debate over the foreign operations bill for fiscal year 1997, congressional friends of Armenia are working, on a bipartisan basis, to provide humanitarian and development aid for Armenia while trying to limit assistance to Turkey and block any funds from going to Azerbaijan until those countries lift their blockades of Armenia.

Madam Speaker, I want to emphasize that the people of Armenia want good relations with their neighbors and the entire world community, and I believe the moral, political and economic power of the United States can go a long way toward helping Armenia achieve that goal.

Madam Speaker, the Republic of Armenia—and friends of Armenia here in the United States—have had much to celebrate recently. Earlier this year, a beautiful new embassy building was opened. It was a great honor and privilege for me to be there for the dedication ceremony, joined by colleagues from this House and the Senate, Armenian political and religious leaders, and members of the community to help inaugurate a real, functioning Embassy, located in the very heart of the Embassy Row area, side by side with many of the world's other great nations. The existence of this Embassy is a tribute to the efforts and dedication of the Armenian-American community—just as the very existence to the Republic of Armenia as an independent nation and state is a triumph of the indomitable will of the people of Armenia to overcome every imaginable obstacle and disadvantage to create a new democracy from one of the world's most ancient nations.

Madam Speaker, I hope that by the time we mark the 10th anniversary of the Republic of Armenia, we can look back with pride on building peace in prosperity in the entire Transcaucasus region, so that the people of Armenia and their neighbors can enjoy a stable, hopeful future. I hope that the Republics of Turkey and Azerbaijan will have responded positively to Armenia's offer to normalize relations, exchanging diplomats, and allowing the free flow of goods and people across their borders. I hope that, with the active participation of the United States, we will have resolved the question of Nagorno-Karabagh, the Armenian enclave located within Azeri borders, to guarantee the security and self-determination of the people of Karabagh. I hope that the effort to tap the vast Caspian Sea oil reserves will finally culminate in the construction of a pipeline carrying the oil west to Mediterranean ports

through Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Turkey—thereby further linking those neighbors in mutually beneficial security and economic ties.

While I prefer to stress the positive, in the real world of 1996 I will work with my fellow supporters of Armenia to make sure that Turkey and Azerbaijan are not rewarded for their intransigence towards their neighbor Armenia. We must continue to enforce section 907, banning direct United States Government aid to Azerbaijan, until that country lifts its blockade of Armenia. We must continue to enforce the Humanitarian Aid Corridor Act, which would cut off aid to Turkey for its blockade of Armenia. We must guard against any tilt by this administration, or any future administration, toward the Turkish and Azeri sides.

Madam Speaker, this anniversary is being marked by a series of events. Last weekend, the Armenian National Committee of America's New Jersey and New York chapters held a series of events the greater New York area, including a concert and a picnic. On Saturday, September 21, the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America held a formal banquet and a cultural program in New York. Tonight, Tuesday, September 24, the Armenian Assembly of America, in conjunction with the Congressional Causus on Armenian Issues, will hold a reception over in the Senate. And on Friday, the Ambassador of Armenia to the United States, His Excellency Mr. Rouben Shaugarian, will host a reception at the Embassy.

Madam Speaker, I hope to see some of my colleagues at these upcoming events, whether they have been a long-standing friend of Armenia or are merely interested in learning about his new—and yet most ancient—country. It is an honor for me to pay tribute to the fifth anniversary of Armenia's Independence, and I look forward to commemorating many more anniversaries in the future.

#### RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the House stands in recess until 12 noon.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 44 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 12 noon.

□ 1200

#### AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. GREENE of Utah) at 12 noon.

#### PRAYER

Bishop Felton May, Washington Episcopal Area United Methodist Church, offered the following prayer:

Almighty God, You created us in Your image. Grant us grace fearlessly to contend against evil, and to make